

# Supporting International Students Affected by Gender-Based Violence:

A Customizable Tool for  
International Students, Post-  
Secondary Administrators, and  
Frontline Workers

POSSIBILITY  
SEEDS

COURAGETOACT.CA  
#IHaveTheCourageToAct

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to begin by acknowledging that this work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonialism that is used to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters. Our work on campuses and in our communities must centre this truth as we strive to end gender-based violence. We commit to continuing to learn and grow and to take an anti-colonial and inclusive approach to the work we engage with. It is our intention to honour this responsibility.

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## ABOUT POSSIBILITY SEEDS

We are a leading project management and policy development social purpose enterprise that works alongside communities, organizations, and institutions to cultivate gender equity. Courage to Act, a national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions, is led by Possibility Seeds, a social purpose enterprise that works alongside clients to create, connect and cultivate gender justice. Learn more about our work at [www.possibilityseeds.ca](http://www.possibilityseeds.ca).

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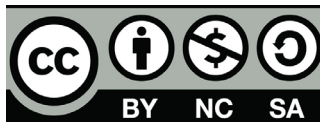
## TO REFERENCE THIS DOCUMENT, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION

Liu, C., Flora, P., Gupta, R., Keren, L., Kordich, E., Sharma, S., & Siddiqui, A. (2020). *Supporting International Students Affected by GBV: A Customizable Tool for International Students, Post-Secondary Administrators and Frontline Workers*. Courage to Act: Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada.

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## FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“Supporting International Students Affected by GBV: A Customizable Tool for International Students, Post-Secondary Administrators and Frontline Workers,” a project by Possibility Seeds, was graciously funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

Canada

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The background features a vibrant purple and blue color palette. Overlaid on this are several wavy, ribbon-like patterns that flow across the page. A prominent feature is a grid of small, light-colored dots that follows the curves of these waves, creating a textured, mesh-like appearance. The overall effect is modern and dynamic.

# Introduction

## Introduction for administrators, individuals on campuses who may work in the field of gender-based or sexual violence prevention and education, and those supporting international students:

This tool was developed as a response to a gap in resources and support for international students in Canada surrounding issues of gender-based or sexual violence. It is intended for international students, administrators, and any other individuals supporting them. This frequently asked questions tool is a best practice document for the impacts of gender-based or sexual violence on international students.

## How To Use This Document:

FAQs are grouped in topic categories. For some FAQs, we've included a "What to Include in this Answer" info box with points you may wish to cover as applicable to your school and information you can include in that particular answer. Schools are encouraged to fill in the blank sections with information that pertains to their specific institution, as we understand that gender-based or sexual violence resources, services, policies, and procedures vary across institutions.

We have also provided a Sample FAQ Answer using a fictional institution, the University of Central Ontario. The Sample FAQ also includes more general answers for international students. We encourage you to adapt these answers and use them as guides for best practices, appropriate and inclusive language, and keep these sections in this document for students to reference. Overall, this tool should guide your response to international students and their peers. Some of the ways that institutions can use this tool are:

- As training material for school administrators, faculty, and student leaders;
- To guide your support of international students and their peers who have been affected by gender-based or sexual violence; and
- To guide your responses to the questions in the document under each fill-in-the-blanks section.

While this document serves as a tool for Canadian campuses to better support their international students, institutions can tailor the document to make it as relevant as possible for their specific circumstances.



## Introduction for students:

As an international student in Canada, you have access to the same level of support and care as any domestic student. If you feel that you have experienced or have seen something that may be gender-based or sexual violence, please know that you are seen, cared for, and believed. We understand that your experiences and pressures as an international student are unique, and the steps that you choose to take will be supported.

### **DISCLAIMER:**

*This FAQ is built around the most up-to-date information available and is not meant to replace any formal legal or immigration advice. Information in this document, such as study and work permit terms, is subject to change at any time in accordance with the Canadian government. Be sure to check the Government of Canada's website and your school's international student centre, other relevant student services, or legal counselling.*

*Answers in this FAQ about confidentiality may not apply if you have a guardian or someone you have given the school permission to communicate with.*

# What is Gender-Based or Sexual Violence?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert your institution's definition(s) of gender-based or sexual violence to best align this toolkit with your practices and campus community. This could include:

- Definitions in institutional GBV/Sexual violence policy



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

**Gender-based violence** An umbrella term that includes sexual violence and other forms of “use and abuse and control over another person” that are “perpetrated against someone based on their gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender” (BCFED, 2018, as cited in Khan & Rowe, 2019, p. 10). Forms of gender-based violence include: physical violence; online violence/technology-facilitated violence; sexual violence including sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual exploitation; spiritual abuse; financial abuse; harassment including stalking; and emotional and psychological violence including put-downs, bullying, threats and intimidation.

### Gender-based violence can take on many different forms, including:

- Physical violence
- Spiritual abuse (including religious abuse)
- Financial Abuse
- Harassment (including stalking)
- Online violence/technology-facilitated violence
- Sexual violence (including sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual exploitation)
- Emotional and psychological violence (including put-downs, bullying, threats,

and intimidation) (Khan, Rowe & Bidgood 2019, pg.11)

There are some other terms to become familiar with under the umbrella of gender-based or sexual violence that may not present as such. For example, early or forced marriage, genital mutilation and/or cutting, intimate partner violence, human trafficking, neglect, stealthing or nonconsensual condom removal, reproductive coercion, and threats of violence (including self-harm) in order to coerce sex are all under the umbrella term of gender-based or sexual violence (Khan et al., 2019, pg.10). Coercion happens when someone puts pressure on someone else to do something—which could be a sexual activity—that they do not want to. This can include emotional manipulation, threats, blackmail, or the promise of rewards.

Gender-based violence, sexual violence, racism, and xenophobia all have to do with the abuse of power and power dynamics. Because of this, some instances of sexual violence may also be instances of racism and xenophobia:

- **Racism** is a belief that one racial group is superior to others and can be openly displayed or more deeply rooted in attitudes and stereotypes.
- **Xenophobia** is the dislike of, or prejudice against, people from other countries (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2020).

A **Survivor** is any individual who has experienced sexual or gender-based violence on or off-campus, whether or not a disclosure, informal complaint or formal complaint has been made. The term survivor is often interchanged with **victim**, which is often used as a legal term in the criminal justice system. Some individuals choose to identify with the term victim. An individual may use the term survivor as a way to reclaim power and/or to highlight the strength it took to survive such violence.

A **disclosure** is separate from a formal report and is when a person shares that they have been subjected to gender-based violence, often for the purpose of accessing support or resources. A survivor may disclose for a number of reasons, such as to receive support or learn about options like reporting. If a disclosure is made in a confidential space such as counselling or health departments, this would not automatically result in a formal complaint or report to your school or police department.

In your school's documents, you might also see the words **perpetrator** and **respondent**. "A perpetrator is a person, group, or institution that directly inflicts, supports and condones violence or other abuse against a person or a group of persons. Perpetrators are in a position of real or perceived power, decision-making and/or authority and can thus exert control over their victims" (PSI, Evidence Series: Gender-Based Violence, 2016). A respondent refers to the person alleged to have committed gender-based violence on or off-campus, in other words, the subject of the complaint(s). A respondent can be any member of a post-secondary institution (student, staff, faculty, librarian, administrator, employee).

# What is Consent?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert your institution's definition of consent to best align this tool with your practices. You might also include:

- Acronyms, campaigns, other tools used in consent education (see FRIES below)
- Definitions in institutional GBV/Sexual violence policy

For this FAQ, here are some questions you may wish to include in your answer:

- In plain language, what does consent mean?
- Is there a Canadian understanding of “consent”?



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

In Canada, the law states that there must be an affirmative “yes”–or voluntary agreement–to engage in sexual relations. Without active agreement, or consent, sexualized violence occurs, and it is a criminal offence.

UCO's Sexual violence policy defines consent as the voluntary agreement by all parties to participate in a specific sexual activity. Consent is an active, informed, clear, voluntary, unimpaired, and conscious choice and is an agreement between individuals who are of legal age. Consent is required before every interaction. It can be withdrawn at any time, and it is important to note that any type of sexual activity without consent is sexualized violence.

One organization, Planned Parenthood (US), uses the acronym **FRIES** to describe consent.

**F**reely Given - Consent happens without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of any substances such as drugs or alcohol.

**R**eversible - Consent can be reversed at any time – if you no longer want to engage in a sexual activity, you can change your mind, and the act must stop.

**I**nformed - Consent is given with all the information – if your sexual partner says that they will use a condom and then they do not, it is nonconsensual.

**E**nthusiastic - Consent is engaging in something that you want to do, not have to do.

**S**pecific - Saying yes to one thing does not automatically mean you have consented to another. For example, if you are making out or kissing, it does not mean that you have consented to sex (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).

The meaning of consent is important to understand because without consent, sexual activity is violence. Understanding consent means to respect the boundaries of other people, and understand when your own boundaries have been violated. If you are unsure of the meaning of consent or if a sexual activity was consensual, talk to the services your school has to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence.



# It Happened to Me: Where Do I Go for Support and Resources at My School?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert the support and resources available on your campus through your school and students' associations to best align with your practices. This may include:

- Sexual violence education and outreach offices
- Peer support centres
- Counselling
- Student Health/medical centres
- International student centre/office
- Exchange student services, program
- Student conduct office

For this FAQ, here are some questions you may wish to include in your answer:

- Does your school require students to report formally if they disclose an instance of gender-based or sexual violence in order to receive support?
- Does your school have resources for students who have experienced and/or been impacted by gender-based or sexual violence? Many schools have gender-based or sexual violence prevention and support offices, while others have their supports in other student services.
- What other student services offer support for survivors? These services do not have to only be for reporting instances of gender-based or sexual violence. While they may provide that service, they also provide support and resources regardless of your decision to report.
- Does your school have different campuses/sites where the supports are different?
- Are there specific policies for residence, different campuses that are separate

from the main institution's policy?

### ✓ SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Here are some supports and resources available at the University of Central Ontario:

- UCO's Office of Sexual Violence Education & Outreach (linked)
- UCO Student Society's Peer Support Centre (linked)
- UCO Student Health and Wellness (linked)
- UCO International (linked)
- Go Global (linked)
- UCO Student Conduct Office (linked)

All of these resources are available to listen and connect you to the supports you need. If you aren't sure where to start, choose one that you feel most comfortable or familiar with.

When you visit the services your school has to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence, here's what you can expect:

- **Information:** You'll receive support of different forms and find more information about the reporting process, UCO's sexual violence policy, mental health support referrals, and other UCO and community resources.
- **Services:** You may also be directed to academic accommodation, UCO Student Health and Wellness, UCO International or others.
- **Support that works for YOU:** Most importantly, OCU support staff will work together with you to decide what kind of support and resources will work best for you.

UCO has a sexual violence policy <linked> and student code of conduct <linked> that you can reference. A **student code of conduct** is a set of expectations around behaviour for all students at your school. A **gender-based or sexual violence policy** describes how your school addresses gender-based or sexual violence on campus through support for survivors, education, and prevention, the process of making a complaint of sexual violence, and how reports or complaints of sexual violence are handled.

If you live in one of our residences, we encourage you to speak to your Residence

Advisor or your Residence Life Coordinator. You can also refer to your Residence Community Standards for more information about the Residence code of conduct.

If you're at UCO-South, you can access all of UCO's supports and resources in addition to UCO-South's Student Services in the Bennett Building. You can also refer to UCO-South's gender-based violence policy <linked>.

### <Optional - tailor to your institution's provincial/territorial policy requirements>

Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island post-secondary schools are all required to have stand-alone gender-based or sexual violence policies. Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador post-secondary schools do not have this requirement, but schools in these provinces may still have their own policies.

UCO Students' Association (UCOSA) also has supports and resources for survivors/victims that provide peer to peer support:

- UCOSA's Sexual Assault Support Centre,
- Peer Support Centre, or
- identity-specific peer supports such as 2SLGBTQ+ or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) centres.

## Do I need any documentation to receive support?

No, you do not need to have any documents or evidence for you to make a disclosure to receive support or accommodations.

## Can I receive support for something that happened before I arrived on campus?

Yes, you can receive support for anything that happened before you arrived on this campus. Sometimes, it can take a while for a survivor to recognize that acts that have been done to us are gender-based or sexual violence. If the impacts of a past incident of gender-based or sexual violence resurface, you can visit your school's gender-based or sexual violence supports or a similar student service at your school, such as counselling services. There is no time limit for when you can seek support or services for something that has happened in the past.

# How will I be supported if the respondent or perpetrator is a faculty or staff member?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

In the space below, institutions should insert specific policies or procedures that they might have in the scenario that a perpetrator/respondent is a faculty or staff member.



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

If the perpetrator is a faculty or staff member at your school, you will be supported in the same way as you would if the perpetrator was another student. If you feel unsafe at school or in the classroom, the gender-based or sexual violence services at your school can help develop a safety plan and discuss options, such as academic accommodations. If the perpetrator is a faculty or staff member, you will be able to access the same academic accommodations as you would if the perpetrator was another student.

# How do I support a friend if they've been affected by gender-based or sexual violence?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert the support and resources available on your campus through your school and students' associations to best align with your practices. This may include:

- Sexual Violence Education and Outreach Offices
- Peer support centres
- Counselling
- Student Health/medical centres
- International student centre/office
- Exchange student services, program
- Student conduct office
- Residence Life
- Provincial, regional and/or community resources



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

If you have a friend or peer that tells you that gender-based or sexual violence has happened to them, it is okay not to have all the answers. For more information and tips on how to support a friend or peer, visit Consent Comes First Ryerson's [BRAVE resource](#) (Consent Comes First Ryerson, n.d.).

Supporting someone who has experienced gender-based or sexual violence can be tough. Make sure you are taking care of yourself, understand your own boundaries, and make referrals to professionals when you feel the support that your friend or peer needs is out of your personal limits. You can access on and off-campus support and resources as well.



The University of Central Ontario's Student Counselling Centre's counsellors and staff are here to support you, your friend and others who are impacted by gender-based or sexual violence.

## If I don't feel safe, how will my school protect me?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert safety measures that your institution can provide students who have been affected by gender-based or sexual violence. This may include:

- Provisions or policies outlined in your institution's sexual violence policy/student code of conduct/safety policies
- Resources, contact numbers, offices/units/departments for students to contact if they do not feel safe
- Emergency numbers/instructions
- Plain language description of how your school approaches safety considerations in cases of gender-based or sexual violence

For this FAQ, here are some questions you may wish to include in your answer:

- How do I access support/protection?
- How will this be decided?
- What do I do if I don't feel safe?
- Who do I talk to if/when I don't feel safe?



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Your safety is the number one priority at UCO. If you don't feel safe, we have services to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual

violence, and we will work together with you to create a safety plan. Safety plans will have strategies to help you feel safe on and off-campus and will take into consideration your academic, work, and social environments, housing, and more.

Whether or not you choose to report, you will continuously have access to support, accommodations, and resources. If an investigation into a report of gender-based or sexual violence is happening, safety measures can be put in place to make sure your safety, the safety of the school, and the safety of the community are kept. These measures could include academic accommodations, a no-contact order, or housing/residence, class, or work accommodations such as moving your class to another location.

Talk to one of our support staff at UCO's Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach to find out more about safety plans.

If you feel your safety is immediately at risk, call UCO Community Safety at 905-333-1111 or call Emergency at 911.

## Do I have to pay to receive support from my school?

No, you do not have to pay to receive support from your school.

## Do I have to formally report to receive support?

No, you do not have to formally report to receive support. If you choose to disclose an incident of gender-based or sexual violence, you are able to disclose as little or as much information as you are comfortable with, and you will still be able to receive the appropriate resources, support, and accommodations from your school.

# Where can I find support online?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert any campus, local, or provincial virtual supports and resources that are available to students. This might include:

- Websites/online resources specific to your institution, including sexual violence support office, international student office, residence life, etc
- Provincial, regional community websites/resources
- “Business hours” and after-hours emergency numbers or email address for your school, i.e. Residence Life on-call, Sexual violence support line, counsellor or case manager
- Out-of-province/out-of-country counselling supports, i.e. third-party providers like MySSP
- Other options available, such as counselling.



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

UCO Student Counselling’s website has a list of online supports and resources you can access 24/7. The Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach also has a 24/7 emergency line. You can call 905-333-1234 if you need support or help from one of our staff or feel like you are in immediate danger due to domestic violence, gender-based or sexual violence and need immediate support.

If you are out of the province or country, UCO students can use My SSP to access free, confidential counselling supports and services in your current location. Download the app to access a counsellor and other resources and supports.

You can also find support online through community, province, or nation-wide resources that will provide options such as counselling or helplines. Here are some online resources for you to access:

- [Good2Talk](#) provides free, confidential, 24/7 support for Ontario post-secondary students.

- [Wellness Together Canada](#) is Canada's website for virtual tools, resources, and counselling for mental health.
- [Women and Gender Equality Canada](#) has a directory of crisis lines for those affected by gender-based violence by province and other additional supports.
- [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#) offers a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse in over 200 languages.
- [What's Up Walk-In](#) provides free virtual mental health counselling over telephone or video.

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most counselling appointments are being held virtually, and your school or students' association may be offering virtual support groups for survivors of gender-based or sexual violence or virtual peer support.**

# Can I access virtual counselling services if I am currently not in Canada?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert information about accessing counselling services from outside Canada. This may include:

- What your counselling services office can and cannot provide for students not in the country
- Any services students can access from outside Canada, i.e. third-party providers such as My SSP
- What role the international student office may have in support (if any)
- Some schools have services for international students to call, websites, or apps to get in touch with mental health professionals. To find out more about your school's virtual mental health services, visit their website.



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Like most health and mental health staff, UCO's counsellors are only licensed to practice within the province or territory where they work. However, UCO students who are located outside of Ontario or Canada can access counsellors virtually through the My SSP service. Download the app to access free, confidential counselling supports and services in your current location. For more information on My SSP, visit UCO Counselling's website.



# Academic Considerations/ Accommodations

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert information about any academic considerations/ accommodations available for international students that have been impacted by gender-based or sexual violence. This may include:

- Info about your sexual or gender-based violence office
- Info about your accessibility services office
- Info about academic advising for each Faculty/School within your institution



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

If you have experienced an incident of gender-based or sexual violence and it has impacted your ability to complete coursework or focus on your education, you may want to seek support in your courses. You can request academic accommodations from your school to help better support you throughout this time. You do not need to make a formal report to receive academic accommodations. If you have been affected by gender-based or sexual violence, you may be able to access accommodations such as: being able to withdraw from a class after the deadline, withdrawing for a semester, being granted extensions for coursework or makeup exams, or changing classroom locations. There may be more accommodation options than this, and you can meet with your school's academic accommodation service or services to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence to learn more.

**Note:** An accommodation such as withdrawing from a course or semester could impact your study permit. Make sure to consult your school's international student centre or other relevant student services for more information.

## What are academic accommodations?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert your institution's definition of academic accommodation in clear, concise, and digestible language. This may include:

- Behaviours or “symptoms” a student may be experiencing that may result in a need for an academic accommodation
- Examples of what accommodations they may get
- Who to contact to learn more or request an academic accommodation



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Many survivors experience physical or mental health impacts due to gender-based or sexual violence. You might have feelings of distress, anger, sadness, lack of energy or many other feelings that impact your ability to focus, complete schoolwork, or study. If you have any of these feelings or others that are having a negative impact on your academics, you can reach out to ask about academic accommodations.

Academic accommodations are an arrangement or changes that you can receive for your courses due to distress on your physical or mental health, which might negatively impact your ability to complete coursework or focus on your education. Examples of academic accommodations include assignment extensions or accommodated exams.

If you would like to speak to someone about academic accommodations, there are a few different ways you can do this. You can work with a support staff member at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach to get connected to the right departments. You can also visit Student Accessibility Services (SAS) or an academic advisor.

For more information about academic accommodations, visit [www.studentaccessibilityservices.uco.ca](http://www.studentaccessibilityservices.uco.ca). SAS staff will work with you to determine how to best support you through your academic journey. Or you can visit [www.academicadvising.uco.ca](http://www.academicadvising.uco.ca) to learn more about academic accommodations in your faculty.

## Where do I find academic accommodations?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

In the space below, institutions should link to where students can find more information about academic accommodations. This may include:

- Link to your school's Sexual violence support centre
- Link to your school's Accessibility office
- Link to your school's academic advising office
- Who this support is available for, i.e. survivors and those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach will work with survivors and those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence to get them connected to the right departments for academic accommodations. They'll help you figure out the best way forward for you.

For more information about academic accommodations, visit [www.studentaccessibilityservices.uco.ca](http://www.studentaccessibilityservices.uco.ca). SAS staff will work with you to determine how to best support you through your academic journey. Or you can visit [www.academicadvising.uco.ca](http://www.academicadvising.uco.ca) to learn more about academic accommodations in your faculty.

# How might accommodations affect my work and study permits?

Will my work permit be affected if I can no longer work or have to take time off school?

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert information about work permits specific to your school's policies and a link to their international students' centre or relevant student service. This might include:

- Information about how to reach an immigration advisor at your school
- Information about how to reach any other related support at your school
- What a student can/doesn't have to share with their immigration advisor
- Information relevant to Work-Study positions
- Any information for international grad students about TAships, Research positions or other academically related jobs for grad students
- Considerations for grad students who are members of on-campus unions
- Your institution's policy on taking a leave of absence from studies (may be different between undergrad and grad)
- Information about Health insurance coverage



## SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Talk to one of UCO's licensed immigration specialists to see how your work or study permit might be impacted. When you're speaking with our immigration specialists, you don't need to share all the details of the incident of gender-based or sexual violence. If you think you might need to speak to an immigration specialist, you can

also go through our staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach. The Centre's staff can help you connect with a UCO immigration specialist, so you don't have to talk about the incident many times.

Your study permit should include the conditions under which you are able to work. The following information about work and study permits is built around the most up-to-date information available and is not meant to replace any formal legal advice. Information about study and work permit terms is subject to change at any time in accordance with the Canadian government. Make sure to check the Government of Canada's website and UCO International, other relevant student services, or legal counselling.

If you have a study permit and are a full-time student, you may work on-campus without a work permit. You can work off-campus without a work permit if you meet the requirements on the government of Canada [webpage](#). If you are on an authorized leave from your studies, in which you are taking a leave of up to a maximum of 150 days from your program, you cannot work off-campus. You can only return to work once you are back to studying. A leave is authorized if your school has confirmed it as such, and you do not need to tell the government of Canada if you are taking an authorized leave, but you do need to provide proof that the leave is authorized and it is no longer than 150 days if they ask for it. For more information, visit the [Government of Canada's webpage on your conditions as a study permit holder in Canada](#) (Government of Canada, 2019).

If you are taking time off your studies, speak to UCO International staff about your health care coverage. They will explain your coverage while you're on a leave of absence.

Remember, only licensed immigration specialists can give immigration advice in Canada. UCO International has free services for students you can access, including licensed immigration specialists.

## Will my study permit be affected if I take extensions or do not finish my program as originally planned?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert information about study permits specific to your school's policies and a link to your international students' centre or relevant student service.

- Information about how to reach an immigration advisor at your school
- Information about how to reach any other related support at your school
- What a student can/doesn't have to share with their immigration advisor
- Information relevant to Work-Study positions
- Any information for international grad students about TAs, Research positions or other academically related jobs for grad students
- Considerations for grad students who are members of on-campus unions
- Your institution's policy on taking a leave of absence from studies (may be different between undergrad and grad)
- Information about Health Insurance coverage for international students



### **SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:**

Talk to one of UCO's licensed immigration specialists to see how your work or study permit might be impacted. When you're speaking with our immigration specialists, you don't need to share all the details of the incident of gender-based or sexual violence. If you think you might need to speak to an immigration specialist, you can also go through our staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach. The Centre's staff can help you connect with a UCO immigration specialist, so you don't have to talk about the incident many times.

The expiry date on the top right corner of your study permit tells you when you have to stop studying and leave Canada. This date is usually the length of your program, plus 90 days. If you take extensions that go over the length of your study permit, you will need to extend your permit to stay in Canada.

The government of Canada website states that you should apply to extend your permit at least 30 days before it expires, and if you apply before your permit expires, you can stay in Canada under the same conditions as your current study permit until their decision is made. Make sure your passport does not expire at the same time as your study permit, as you cannot extend your study permit beyond your passport's expiry date (Government of Canada, 2020a).

The best course of action is to speak to one of UCO's licensed immigration specialists to figure out what to do next. They can help you apply for an official Leave of Absence, gather documents for your study permit extension and connect you to other resources on campus.



If you've already taken some time away from your studies and need to apply for a study permit extension, one of our immigration specialists can help you gather the right documents for your extension application.

If you are taking time off your studies, speak to UCO International staff about your health care coverage. They will explain your coverage while you're on a leave of absence.

## If I take extensions or do not finish my program as originally planned, will my post-graduation work permit be impacted?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

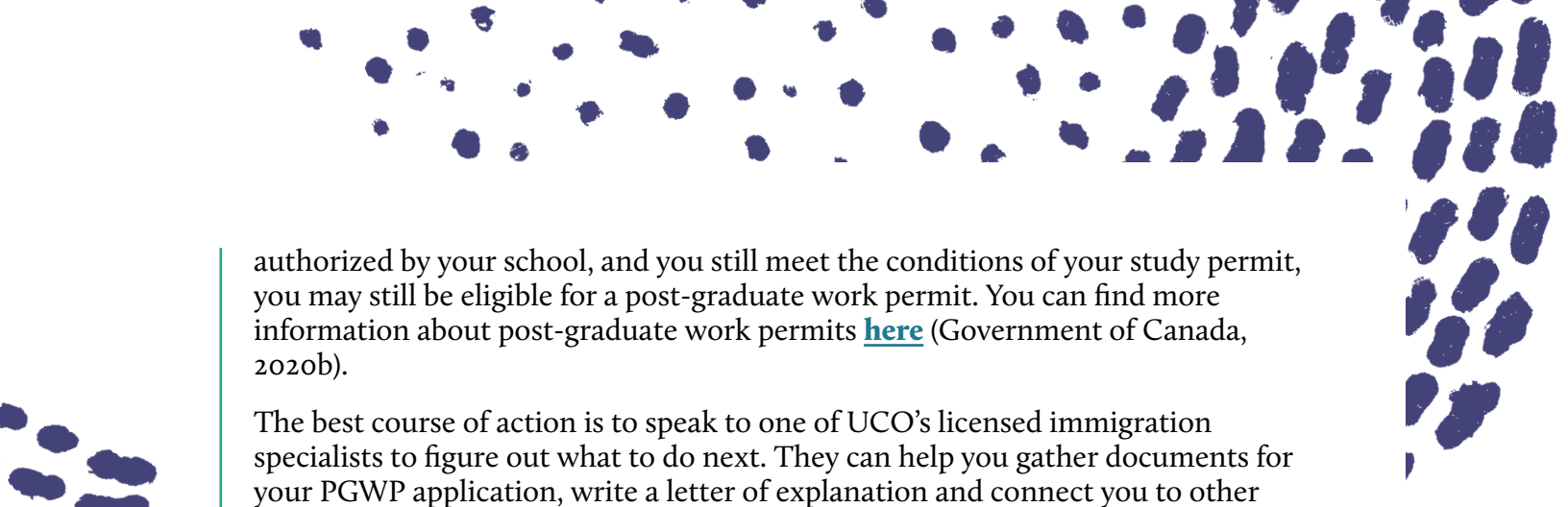
For this answer, insert information about study permits specific to your school's policies and a link to your international students' centre or relevant student service.

- Information about how to reach an immigration advisor at your school
- Information about how to reach any other related support at your school
- What a student can/doesn't have to share with their immigration advisor
- Information relevant to Work-Study positions
- Any information for international grad students about TAs, Research positions or other academically related jobs for grad students
- Considerations for grad students who are members of on-campus unions
- Your institution's policy on taking a leave of absence from studies (may be different between undergrad and grad)



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

You may not be eligible for a post-graduate work permit if you take an unauthorized leave from your study program and you did not meet the conditions of your study permit by taking this leave. If your leave is less than 150 days,



authorized by your school, and you still meet the conditions of your study permit, you may still be eligible for a post-graduate work permit. You can find more information about post-graduate work permits [here](#) (Government of Canada, 2020b).

The best course of action is to speak to one of UCO's licensed immigration specialists to figure out what to do next. They can help you gather documents for your PGWP application, write a letter of explanation and connect you to other resources on campus.

If you are taking time off your studies, speak to UCO International staff about your health care coverage. You are automatically enrolled in UHIP when you register for courses, and your coverage ends in August of the current academic year. You may wish to extend your UHIP coverage beyond this while you wait for your PGWP application decision. UCO International staff can help you with this process.

# Health and Wellness Support and Resources

## What sexual health resources do I have access to?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert links to and information about your school's health plans, especially information that might pertain to gender-based or sexual violence. This may include:

- Information/links to your health insurance plan website
- Information/links to your school's extended health plan website
- Where international students can access resources such as your school's medical centre, wellness centre, counselling centre, etc



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

You do not need to make a formal report to access sexual health or other physical or mental health resources.

All international students are automatically enrolled in UHIP when you register for courses, and your coverage ends in August of the current academic year. You also have an extended health care plan through the University of Central Ontario Student Association (UCOSA). Your UHIP covers things like doctor's visits, hospital visits, surgeries and other medical procedures. Your UCOSA extended health plan will cover things like prescriptions, certain mental health supports, dental care, vision care and more. For more information on what's covered, visit our UHIP website or UCOSA's extended health care plan website.

You can also access healthcare outside of UCO. Testing for sexually transmitted infections (STI) is available free at UCO Student Health, family doctors' offices, walk-in clinics, sexual health clinics, and other public health units and community centres. Most communities also have sexual health clinics where you can find

counselling, testing, and referrals, depending on your circumstances. Most of these services may be free of charge. You can also check UHIP's website for a list of health care providers that will bill UHIP directly, so you don't have to pay out-of-pocket. If you do have to pay, you may be able to submit your receipt for reimbursement. Our UHIP team can help you with your reimbursement submission.

## Where can I find emergency contraceptives?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert links to and information about what emergency contraceptives are available to them via their school and where they can find them. Institutions should also add in the policies and procedures surrounding emergency contraceptives from their respective province or territory. This may include:

- If your school's extended health care plan covers emergency contraceptives
- If students can access emergency contraceptives at your school's health care or pharmacy



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Emergency contraceptives (also known as birth control) are available in pharmacies across the country for around \$35-40. Plan B is used to prevent pregnancy, and if taken within 72 hours (three days) and preferably within 12 hours of the incident, it can prevent pregnancy. UCO Student Health has Plan B available for students at our clinic.

## Where do I go if I need medical attention?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert links to and information about where students should go to seek medical—especially medical services specific to gender-based or sexual violence—

attention on- and off-campus. This may include:

- Your school's medical centre
- Hospitals close to campus or in neighbourhoods where students may tend to live
- Information about health care insurance like where to get a copy of their coverage card, how to submit reimbursements, if a hospital is in the insurance plan's preferred provider network, etc.
- Certain provinces offer provincial health coverage to certain international students, either for free or for a premium. In these cases, international students are usually required to apply to the province. Often, in cases where provincial health insurance is not available, students are required to purchase private insurance. This can often be done through their school in Canada. Institutions in provinces which do not offer provincial healthcare coverage to international students may require these individuals to subscribe to mandatory health plans, while other institutions may offer optional coverage plans. The University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) in Ontario is an example of a health coverage plan. UHIP allows international students to be treated at the school's health & wellness centre as well local hospitals or medical facilities in the area. Students may have to pay for ambulance services if utilized. UHIP coverage includes:
  - STI testing- an appointment with a physician is covered by UHIP.
  - Birth control- an appointment with a physician is covered by UHIP
  - Emergency contraception- this is covered depending on the type of emergency contraception
  - Abortion- UHIP does cover medical abortion, but it does not clearly state this on their website
  - PrEP and PEP- appointments with a doctor are covered by UHIP. Hospitals can provide a prescription when visiting the emergency room
  - HPV vaccine- not covered by UHIP



#### **SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:**

If you have been sexually assaulted, consider going to your nearest hospital's emergency room for urgent care. Choosing to go to a hospital can be helpful for many reasons, as they will treat any injuries. Additionally, they can complete an optional sexual assault forensic exam that can be used to collect evidence that is given to the police if you choose to report. To learn more about sexual assault

kits, you can visit a website such as the [Saskatoon Sexual Assault Information Centre](#).

You can also receive follow-up care such as STI testing and counselling services from a hospital, another healthcare service, or a community sexual assault support centre at any point after the incident.

Some hospitals will bill UHIP directly for your visit if you show your UHIP card. If you need your UHIP card, please email [uhip@uco.ca](mailto:uhip@uco.ca) with your name and student number. Staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach can also help you access your UHIP card. If the hospital you visit does not bill directly, hold on to your receipt so that you can get reimbursed. For help with reimbursements, email [uhip@uco.ca](mailto:uhip@uco.ca) or speak to the Centre's support staff.

UCO Student Health will bill UHIP directly, as will Central Ontario General Hospital. We recommend you go to the hospital closest to you or that you're most comfortable with, and UCO staff will help you with the billing/reimbursement.

## If I go to the hospital, will they tell my school?

If you go to the hospital, they will not tell UCO. Hospitals in Canada are bound by privacy legislation that ensures patient confidentiality. Healthcare privacy and protection laws across the country differ depending on the province; however, all maintain a general regard for patient confidentiality. To find out more about each province or territory's healthcare privacy legislation, visit [this resource](#).



# Off-Campus Supports

## Where do I go for support in my community?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert links to and information about community resources that are available for students, for example, the local sexual assault centre. This may include:

- Community support that is specific to Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students, and 2SLGBTQ+ students (strongly encouraged)



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Most communities in Canada have women's shelters, sexual assault centres, and other similar supports that you can access. Your school's services to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence may be able to refer you to off-campus resources if that is your preference, or you can visit your school's website to see if they have more information. You can also use [Ending Violence Association of Canada's resource list](#) to find community resources near you.

[Healing in Colour](#) also offers a directory of therapists who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour to help you find culturally relevant therapy and other mental health resources, and [Across Boundaries](#) offers equitable, holistic mental health services for racialized communities. [Basic and Immediate Sexual Violence Resources for Somali Canadians](#) is a document for Somali Canadians about crisis intervention, mental health resources, and basic needs and legal resources.

## Where can I find services and support in other languages?

Depending on your school and the province you are in, various services and supports may be available in other languages. For example, the Language

Interpreter Services (LIS) program of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration funds organizations across Ontario to provide services to communicate with their clients who have limited English or French language skills and are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, as well as those who have been exploited through human trafficking. To find an organization near you that provides interpreter services for victims of sexual violence, visit the [LIS agencies website](#). [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#) offers a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all women who have experienced abuse in over 200 languages.

If you choose to go through the justice system with your case, Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to the assistance of translation and interpreter services.

## Where can I ask a legal question or find legal aid?

Depending on your circumstances and income, you might qualify for legal aid in your area. Click one of the following links to learn more: [Legal Aid BC](#), [Legal Aid Alberta](#), [Legal Aid Saskatchewan](#), [Legal Aid Manitoba](#), [Legal Aid Ontario](#), [Legal Aid New Brunswick](#), [Legal Aid Quebec](#), [Legal Aid Nova Scotia](#), [Legal Aid NL](#), and [Legal Aid PEI](#).

You may also have a legal aid clinic or services provided by your school. Visit your school's website to learn more.

# I Want to Make a Report: Where do I start?

## What are my reporting options?

A report is a formal statement to your school or to the police about the incident of gender-based or sexual violence. A formal report may lead to an investigation.

If you would like to make a report, you can report with your school or with the police. It is your choice whether or not you choose to report an incident of gender-based or sexual violence to your school or the police.

## How do I make a report at my school?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert a link to your school's gender-based or sexual violence policy, gender-based or sexual violence response protocol and procedures, and/or student code of conduct documents. This information should also be summarized in clear and digestible language for students to understand. This should include:

- The time frame in which students have to report an incident of gender-based or sexual violence
- Who they can speak to for more information



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

For more specific information about UCO's reporting process, visit the Centre for Sexual Violence and Education website. You can also find UCO's gender-based or sexual violence policy, gender-based or sexual violence response protocol and procedures, or student code of conduct documents through the Centre.

You can make a formal **complaint** to your school if the **respondent** or **perpetrator**—the person who carried out the act of gender-based or sexual violence—

is a student, staff, or faculty member at the same school, and the act falls under the scope of your school's gender-based or sexual violence policy or student code of conduct. If you are unsure, you can consult the Centre's support staff. No matter the outcome of the investigation, you can continue to receive support and accommodations from UCO.

## How do I report to the police?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert information about your region's policies and procedures for reporting to the police. This information should be in clear, concise, and digestible language for students to understand. This should include:

- The time frame in which students have to file a report
- How to get support in reporting to police



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Our support for survivors includes support and help navigating the reporting process to the police. Staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach can speak with you about this process. You may also wish to visit the Central Ontario City Police website for more information.

If you report to the police, they will need to investigate and will require your participation in the process. If the matter proceeds to court, you may be called to give a statement or provide evidence, and it may be a public process. This can mean that members of the public, such as the media, can access the court proceeding. Please note that if you withdraw your participation, they may still choose to proceed with legal action. Throughout the process, you will be provided with victim service support, and you have a right to an interpreter.

Depending on where the incident occurred, the report would have to be made to that local police service. Talk to your school's gender-based or sexual violence staff for more information.

Publication bans are a part of your rights as a victim if you choose to go through the justice system. This prevents anyone from publishing, broadcasting, or

sending any information that could identify a witness, victim, or anyone else who participates in the process. For more information on publication bans and your rights and supports available to you as a victim, visit [Publication Bans](#) and the [Canadian Victims Bill of Rights](#) (Department of Justice Canada, 2018).

## I have information or documents relating to an incident of gender-based or sexual violence. What should I do?

If you have been affected by gender-based or sexual violence in any way, as a victim/survivor or witness, and are unsure if you would like to make a report, you can save and collect helpful evidence such as the date and time of the incident, text messages, other forms of messages from the perpetrator or screenshots, photos, and videos.

## Where can I report or receive support if I live in residence?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, insert a link to your residence gender-based or sexual violence policy (if applicable). This information should also be summarized in clear, concise, and digestible language for students to understand.

### ✓ SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Our Residence Life staff are available to help you 24/7 with questions and urgent or emergency situations. Samara Saini is our Counsellor-in-Residence, and she can meet with you in Residence if you need support. Your Residence Advisor is also available to support you if you want to speak to a peer or need support while you're in residence.

If you would like to report an incident of gender-based or sexual violence in residence, Samara can help you navigate this process, or you can work with staff at

the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach.

If you feel you are in immediate danger, please call UCO Community Security at 905-333-1111 or 911.

You do not need to make a formal report to receive any supports in Residence.

## If I report with my school, who will see my complaint?

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THIS ANSWER:

For this answer, institutions should insert information about their own policies about confidentiality in gender-based or sexual violence reporting processes. This may include:

- Links to your school's privacy policy
- Links to your school's gender-based or sexual violence policy
- Who to speak to for more information about privacy and confidentiality at your school



### SAMPLE FAQ ANSWER:

Confidentiality is based on privacy and respecting someone's wishes about not sharing information. In this context, the survivor of gender-based or sexual violence has the ability to decide what information gets shared and who it gets shared with. This means your information will not be shared unless it is required for the purpose of coordinating safety and supports or for investigation purposes. Exceptions to confidentiality could include if an individual is at risk of inflicting harm on themselves or others, if there is a risk to campus or community safety, or if the event involves a minor.

UCO takes your privacy and confidentiality very seriously. For more information on UCO's privacy policy, you can review our Policy on Access to Student Records and Protection of Privacy. If you choose to report, staff at the Centre for Sexual Violence Education and Outreach can help you navigate this policy.



## If I report to the school, who will know?

### **Will it show up on my transcript?**

If you choose to report, it will be kept confidential as per the circumstances above and will not show up on your transcript.

### **Will my family know?**

If you choose to report, it will be kept confidential as per the circumstances above, and your family will not be notified by your school.

### **Will my peers or classmates know?**

If you choose to report, it will be kept confidential as per the circumstances above, and your peers and classmates will not be notified by your school.

### **Will my instructors or teaching assistants know?**

Your instructors or teaching assistants will not be notified by your school.

### **Will anyone from my home country know?**

If you choose to report, it will be kept confidential as per the circumstances above. Your school will not be in contact with anyone from your home country, including your home country's government.

### **Will IRCC know?**

If you choose to report, it will be kept confidential as per UCO's protection of privacy policy. Each Spring and Fall, every Designated Learning Institution is required to compile and submit a report on international students' enrollment status that term. If you are taking a leave of absence from your studies related to an incident of gender-based or sexual violence, UCO will only record that you are on a leave of absence but will not share any information about why you are doing so. You are also not required to share your reasons for taking a leave of absence with UCO International.

## Do I need to report to the police to receive support from my school or community?

You do not need to report to the police to receive support. It is completely up to you whether or not you would like to make a police report unless there is a risk of inflicting harm on yourself or others in the community, or if the situation is involving a minor or someone below the age that is determined by your province. The resources and services available around you will believe and support you regardless of your decision to report to the police, and talk to a staff member from your school's gender-based or sexual violence services or similar service for more information.

Keep in mind that if you do choose to report to the police, once the report has been made, you will be unable to withdraw the report. In some schools, if you report a sexual assault to your campus police, they may be required to notify your regional police as well. The process of reporting to the police can be difficult or unclear, but if you do choose to report, you will be able to receive support from your school's services to support survivors or those impacted by gender-based or sexual violence.

## If I report to the police and/or go through the Canadian justice system, will my home country know?

If you file a formal report with the police as a victim, your home country will not know.

## What does Canada's justice system look like?

You do not need to go through the justice/legal system to receive support. Canada has a democratic legal process that is founded on the presumption of innocence, meaning everyone is innocent until proven guilty. To find out more about Canada's justice system, visit [Discover Canada - The Justice System](#) or [Canada's System of Justice Resource](#).

## FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDED:

For international students, further research is needed in three main areas: More extensive perpetrator resources, consent and gender-based or sexual violence awareness, and data on their unique experiences with gender-based or sexual violence. Additionally, the student voice should be further included in gender-based or sexual violence prevention and education work pertaining to international students.

To begin, international students who have received a complaint against them within their institution have access to limited resources. Work and study permits complicate their circumstances, and these students often fear deportation. Because the outcome for these students is very circumstantial, more research needs to be done by immigration law professionals to compile a resource or toolkit that includes the implications of how to implement academic accommodations such as extensions and the impact on respondents' work and study permits. An example of a useful resource for international students who are respondents is a frequently asked questions document, with questions and answers such as:


### **“If I have received a sanction by my school, will I lose my study or work permit?”**

This question only applies to those who are respondents or perpetrators of a complaint or criminal charge and not to those making the complaint.

If you are a respondent to a complaint, nothing will happen to your study and/or work permits while they are valid if you receive a sanction from the school without a criminal charge. However, if you need to renew your study and/or work permit, you may be asked to provide a transcript. If your sanction is on your transcript, this could affect the government's decision to renew your study and/or work permit. For more information, consult your school's policies and international students' services office or equivalent.

### **If I have a criminal charge, will I lose my study or work permit?**

This question only applies to those who are respondents or perpetrators of a complaint or criminal charge and not to those making the complaint.



When applying for a graduate work permit, you will be asked if you have been charged with a criminal offence. Depending on the case, there might be implications that affect your application and work permit status.”

Furthermore, there is limited data on the unique experiences of international students and gender-based or sexual violence. Recent reports released by L'Université du Québec à Montréal found that in Quebec, international students experienced sexual assault more than their domestic counterparts (Mosaic BC, 2019). There is a wide range of complexities when it comes to international students and gender-based or sexual violence, such as language barriers, unfamiliar laws and cultural norms, further marginalization due to racism and xenophobia, and distance from family, friends, and other support systems. These additional barriers can make it more likely for international students to be exploited, and the intersections that specifically impact international students' experiences with gender-based or sexual violence have yet to be extensively studied.

The last area of research that is needed for international students is further development of consent and gender-based or sexual violence awareness and educational resources that are both culturally competent and available in multiple languages. Many international students may come from countries with different laws, regulations, and cultural norms, and there is a lack of resources for those wanting to learn more about gender-based or sexual violence, consent, and related issues in the Canadian context. While many gender-based or sexual violence prevention and education programs are intersectional, not many speak towards the specific barriers that international students face and how additional factors, such as xenophobia and language barriers, result in increased violence towards international students. There is also minimal support for student survivors of gender-based or sexual violence in multiple languages on post-secondary campuses. Some organizations, such as MOSAIC, have developed gender-based violence prevention and education programs specifically for international students, but these programs are not common across institutions.

Sexual or gender-based violence prevention and education for international students must incorporate the voice of students. They should be consulted during the beginning stages of development and be continuously involved and consulted to ensure the sexual or gender-based violence prevention and education work is meeting student-centred values.



## PROMISING PRACTICES

In British Columbia, MOSAIC, one of the largest settlement non-profit organizations in Canada, launched its “Peer Cafe” initiative in April of 2019. This initiative addresses sexual assault and its impacts on international students and consists of workshops for international students about prevention and support, free and confidential emotional and practical support such as safety planning and assistance with financial, housing, and legal aspects, a [safety guide](#), and an awareness campaign. Their support, safety guide, and awareness campaign are available in English, Chinese, Arabic, Punjabi, and Japanese. Peer Cafe is a culturally aware and intersectional initiative that is critically important in addressing the prevalence of gender-based or sexual violence among international students. It could be adopted by post-secondary institutions and student associations to better support the growing population of international students across the country (Mosaic BC, 2019). See the [Peer Cafe web page](#) for more information.



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